

Michigan Nature Association Saginaw Wetlands Nature Sanctuary



Sanctuary at a Glance:

Location: Huron County

Size: 155 acres

History: Initial tract was purchased in 1984. Additional parcels were added in subsequent years.

About MNA:

The Michigan Nature Association is a nonprofit conservation organization working to protect Michigan's rare, threatened and endangered species by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Established in 1952, MNA's members, donors, and volunteers have built a remarkable network of more than 170 nature sanctuaries across the state – the largest network of natural areas established and maintained by a nonprofit conservation organization in Michigan.



Michigan Nature Association

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Photo: Katherine Hollins

Saginaw Wetlands Nature Sanctuary protects the rarest plant community in Michigan: the lakeplain prairie. Of the nearly 160,000 acres of lake plain prairie estimated in the 1800s in Michigan, less than 0.5 percent remain today. In fact, the Michigan Natural Features Inventory believes that only 14 such prairies exist in Michigan today, totaling only 511 acres.

This sanctuary was identified in spring 1983 by ecologist and naturalist Fred Case, MNA Executive Secretary Bertha Daubendiek, and a group of volunteers who were conducting a lakeplain search for wet prairies in the Saginaw Bay region. MNA staff and volunteers felt the best way to protect the rare species found in lake plain prairies was by setting aside a large tract of property for preservation.

After an exhaustive search, four parcels of land were purchased in 1984. The sanctuary continued to grow through purchases of 13 additional properties, the most recent completed in 2008.

Saginaw Wetlands is composed of lake plain oak openings, wet prairie, wet mesic prairie, old field, southern hardwood swamp, and mesic southern forest. The lakeplain prairie found at Saginaw Wetlands Nature Sanctuary is considered a critically imperiled natural community in Michigan and globally due to the low number of occurrences and vulnerability of these sites to degradation.

Home to unique and rare plants, the landscape provides important breeding habitat for grassland birds, waterfowl and other migratory birds, and a diverse array of mammals, reptiles and rare insects.

Saginaw Wetlands Nature Sanctuary | Michigan Nature Association

The expansive prairie remnant found here is predominantly shadegrass prairie with dominant grasses, mainly indiagrass, Blue jointgrass, Big Bluestem, cord grass and sedges. Wildflowers of note include Blue-eyed grass, toadflax, gentians, Kalm's lobelia, Ohio goldenrod, and dense blazingstar.

Protecting Saginaw Wetlands

Phragmites is an invasive species of particular concern as recent low water levels on Lake Huron have allowed hundreds of acres of Great Lakes bottomlands to become dominated by phragmites and cattails adjacent to the sanctuary boundary.

MNA's stewardship team is actively managing phragmites and establishing buffer zone between the lakeplain prairie and the Great Lakes bottomlands to protect the diversity of the prairie.

MNA's stewardship team is protecting and maintaining Saginaw Wetlands' natural communities by removing and treating invasive species and implementing a prescribed burn regime to deter encroaching trees and shrubs, which threaten to shade out the prairie. Ongoing management helps maintain the diversity of the lakeplain prairie.



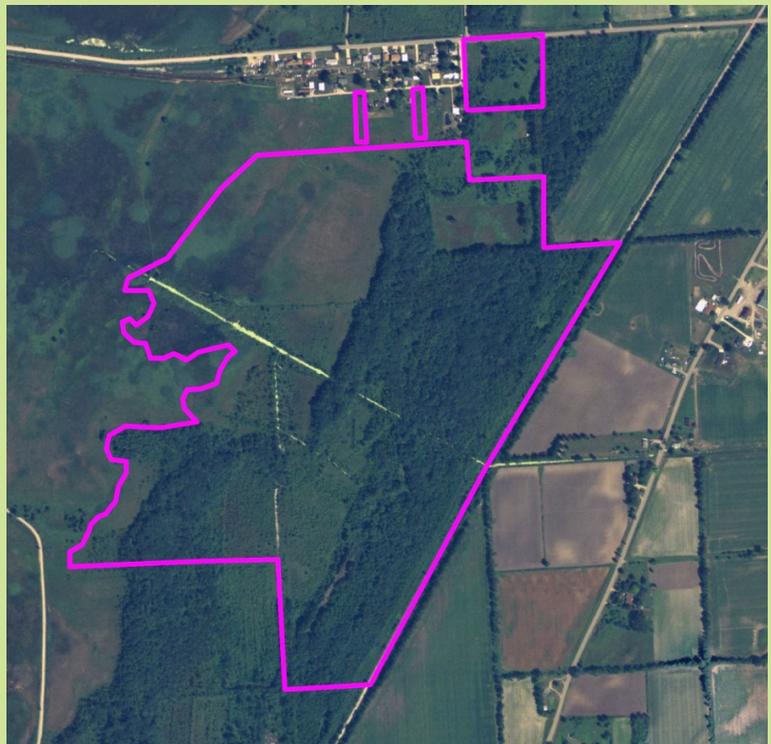
Photo: Phillip Bergquist



Photo: Dan Fox

Planning Your Visit:

Saginaw Wetlands Nature Sanctuary is classified as a C sanctuary by the Michigan Nature Association. C sanctuaries contain sensitive areas, pose significant risks to visitors and/or otherwise do not ordinarily allow public access. Visits to C sanctuaries must be arranged through the MNA office. Please call 866-223-2231 for more information.



Sanctuary Map